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AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS, FEB. 16 (UPI) - AMERICANS LINKED

TO A SUSPECTED ESPIONAGE RING THAT COULD HAVE DELIVERED ARMS, AMMUNITION AND PARACHUTES TO UNKNOWN CONTINGENTS BY AIR BUNGLED THE OPERATION IN "AMATEURISH" FASHION, POLICE SAID TODAY.

THE TANGLED PLOT WAS EMERGING FROM A MULTI-NATION PROBE OF A PLANLOAD OF ARMS FROM COMMUNIST CZECHOSLOVAKIA LATER IMPOUNDED IN MALTA. DUTCH AUTHORITIES WERE QUESTIONING THREE U.S. CIVILIAN PILOTS AND AN AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN BUT FEW DETAILS WERE RELEASED.

A FOUR-ENGINE SUPER CONSTELLATION WAS IMPOUNDED AT MALTA FEB. 4 FOR CARRYING \$246,000 WORTH OF EQUIPMENT WITHOUT A PERMIT. THE CARGO ALLEGEDLY INCLUDED PARACHUTES PICKED UP IN PRAGUE. A SECOND PLANE, DC4, WAS GROUNDED IN AMSTERDAM LAST WEEK FOR LACK OF PROPER REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS.

THE PLANES WERE OWNED BY UNITED STATES AIRWAYS, ACCORDING TO AUTHORITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS.

THE POLICE HERE HELD LEONARD JERMAN DREW, 40, SAID TO BE AN AMERICAN CITIZEN LIVING IN HOLLAND, ON UNDISCLOSED CHARGES. OFFICIALS SAID THE FLIERS--VINCENT F. BURGER, 36, OF (3052 SW 20TH ST.) MIAMI, JOHN CONSOLINE, 27, AND PAUL SCHWANKE, 32--ALL REPORTEDLY U.S. CITIZENS, HAD THEIR PASSPORTS REVOKED AND HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO LEAVE HOLLAND FOR THE UNITED STATES BY TOMORROW NIGHT.

BOTH PLANES WERE CHARTERED BY AN AGENCY RUN BY AN ASSOCIATE OF DREW, A MAN IDENTIFIED AS ROBERT FARQUHAR, ALSO SAID TO BE AN AMERICAN. FARQUHAR SAID HE OPERATED AN AIR FREIGHT AGENCY AND A BROKERAGE FIRM AND CHARTERED THE PLANES FOR A "PRINCIPAL" HE DID NOT NAME.

POLICE CAPTAIN EVERT GERRITSEN SAID TODAY FARQUHAR'S ALLEGED BEHAVIOR DEMONSTRATED THE "AMATEURISH CHARACTER" OF THE OPERATION. HE SAID THE AGENT TRIED TO OBTAIN PARACHUTES IN THE NETHERLANDS BY SAYING HE WANTED THEM TO "DROP ARMS IN AFRICA."

(NEWSPAPERS IN ENGLAND SPECULATED THAT THE IMPOUNDED ARMS AND MUNITIONS HAD BEEN DESTINED FOR REBEL FORCES IN THE CONGO FIGHTING PREMIER MOISE TSHOMBE'S LEOPOLDVILLE GOVERNMENT.)

GERRITSEN SAID THAT UNITED STATES AIRWAYS DIRECTOR LUCIEN PICKET WAS BEING SOUGHT FOR QUESTIONING IN THE AFFAIR BUT HAD LEFT THE COUNTRY. HE WAS THOUGHT TO BE IN LONDON.

AUTHORITIES SAID DREW WAS A FORMER PRESIDENT AND OWNER OF A NOW-DEFUNCT PRIVATE U.S. AIRLINE, SEVEN SEAS.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAID IN WASHINGTON UNITED STATES AIRWAYS WAS A CORPORATION REGISTERED IN NEW YORK WITH HEADQUARTERS IN LUXEMBOURG. OFFICIALS SAID THE AMERICANS CLAIMED THEY WERE WORKING "IN BEHALF OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT" BUT A SPOKESMAN SAID, "THIS IS NOT THE CASE."

AMERICAN AND DUTCH AUTHORITIES IN HOLLAND AND OFFICIALS FROM BELGIUM, SWITZERLAND, GHANA AND MALTA WERE INVESTIGATING.

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